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CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM  
RELEASE IN FULL 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR: Honorable Chester Bowles  
Mr. McGeorge Bundy  
Mr. Allen Dulles

SUBJECT: Special Operations in Critical Areas

In cooperation with Dr. Walter Rostow, our General Counsel, Mr. Cyrus Vance, his Assistant for Organizational & Management Planning, Mr. Solis Herwitz, and General Lansdale, have been at work on the development of a concept for an organization to deal with special operations in critical areas. That work has resulted in the preparation of the attached plan, the application of which to a specific area, namely, Vietnam, is set forth in a proposed action paper which is also enclosed. Both Dr. Rostow and Mr. William P. Bundy have reviewed these papers, which reflect their ideas and suggestions.

In view of the urgency for action on Vietnam, I would like to bring the enclosures up for discussion at our meeting on next Thursday, April 20th.

Enclosures

*Lowell Gelpert*

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**ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS**  
**IN CRITICAL OVERSEAS AREAS AND AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY**

**Introduction**

In most of the countries of the world which are outside the Sino-Soviet sphere of control the United States is carrying on political, military, economic, information and intelligence activities designed to further the national interests of the United States by keeping such countries from falling under Sino-Soviet control or by preventing the development of situations which could have a dangerous adverse effect on the interests of the United States. Each of the major categories of activity is under the jurisdiction of a different government department or agency. Political matters are handled by the Department of State; defense and military assistance by the Department of Defense; economic assistance by the International Cooperation Administration (ICA); information by the U. S. Information Agency (USIA); and intelligence activities and specified clandestine operations by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Recent events such as have occurred in Laos have demonstrated unmistakably that the government machinery and procedures for coordinating these diversified activities in furtherance of the national objectives, to the extent that such machinery or procedures exist at all, are most inadequate. In a situation where the political stability and economic viability are so tenuous that the slightest shift might throw the country into the Sino-Soviet orbit or into an Anti-American position this lack of adequate coordinating machinery and procedures could well be fatal. Different unsupervised approaches by several agencies in carrying out their respective assignments could in themselves defeat attainment of our national objectives. It is therefore imperative that we develop without delay effective machinery and procedures for coordinating all of our efforts in areas which have or may become critical. These must include activities in Washington and in the field.

The same machinery and procedures also must be effective to enable us to deal on a selective basis with foreseeable major problems in a country before that country becomes critical, and to enable us to take advantage of opportunities for improving our position in those areas where such opportunities exist.

### Deficiencies at the Washington Level

Existing machinery and procedures at the Washington level are deficient in six major respects:

1. They are inadequate to assist the President to determine at the earliest possible time that a specific area is approaching the critical stage or that an opportunity for improvement exists.

The earlier there is recognition of criticality, opportunity for improvement, or major problems the better the chance will be that we can successfully devise means of coping with the problems of a country. Yet, too often we as a government have failed to appreciate in time that a critical point has been or is being reached. Signs that the situation in Laos was becoming critical were apparent long before our acceptance of the fact. We failed to properly recognize the seriousness of developments in Cuba until events were upon us. Similarly, for some time there has been evidence that the situation in Vietnam is critical.

Traditionally, the State Department has exercised the responsibility for recognizing criticality or opportunity to improve our position. This may have been satisfactory in a less dangerous and complex era. Today elements other than the classic political factors which are the focus of State's concern may determine the over-all political picture. Moreover, State's concept of operations and its organizational structure militate against arriving at early decisions and providing flexibility for changing decisions. The only alternative today is the National Security Council. The NSC, however, is not organized today to deal readily with problems requiring quick decisions. It has become formalized and is restricted by the machinery and procedures which have been created to assist it. ✓

2. They do not provide for a clear formulation of United States objectives in terms of operational goals within a specified time period in a critical country or in a country of opportunity.

Until President Kennedy in recent weeks made clear our objectives in Laos, no one could say with any certainty just what our objectives in that country were. Different -- and inconsistent -- objectives were being pursued at one and the same time by the several agencies operating in Laos. There were those who sought a stable Laos clearly oriented or allied with the West. There were those who sought a neutral

Laos inclined toward the West and capable of handling its internal security problems. Again, there were those who sought a truly neutral Laos in which the Communist influence, while present, would be prevented from reaching the point of actual take-over. Indeed even today we would have great difficulty in defining at this time just what are our national objectives in Vietnam.

Here again the State Department and the NSC are the machinery for the formulation of our operational goals. This machinery has not been able to satisfactorily fulfill this assignment.

3. They do not provide for the formulation of a unified plan designed to meet the national objective and covering the special operation of all participating agencies.

At the present time we have no machinery of any character for the development of a unified plan covering the special operations of all participating agencies unless we impose the task on the NSC. Unsatisfactory as were the operations of the Operations Coordinating Board, because of its formality in procedures and bureaucratic organization, it at least served in some measure to keep departmental planning in accord with NSC decisions. It would seem imperative that machinery be established to perform this function.

4. They do not provide for maximum effective utilization of the total U. S. resources.

Jurisdictions of the several agencies are so fixed that there is insufficient flexibility in the utilization of assets. Too often the agency most competent to perform a particular task at a particular time is unable to apply itself directly to a task for which it has particular competence and capability because of prior assignment of responsibility to another agency. In addition our resources are limited and we must devise a plan for their selective use in those areas where their need is most urgent.

5. They do not provide for coordinated monitoring of the special operations of each participating agency to determine whether they are in accordance with plan or in furtherance of the national objective.

For the most part monitoring of the special operations of a department or agency to determine whether they are in conformity with the national plan and objective is the responsibility of the individual

department or agency. Rarely are those activities monitored from an over-all viewpoint as part of the entire complex of those activities in a country. Recently, one person has been designated to monitor all United States special operations in Laos. But the assignment is only an additional assignment to the monitor who is heavily burdened with other responsibilities.

6. They do not readily permit changes to be made in the plan in light of experience or in view of changing circumstances.

Absent centralized monitoring, the responsibility for determining what changes should be made falls upon the individual agencies. If one agency in light of its own experience recognizes the need for change and another does not, increased confusion must necessarily follow.

#### Deficiencies in the Field

The components of the several agencies operating in the field have responsibilities with respect to each of the six areas where deficiencies exist at the Washington level. Although the determination of criticality or opportunity for improvement and the formulation of national objectives are the function of the highest echelon of government the information that emanates from those on the spot is a vital ingredient of the ultimate decision. Detailed planning in furtherance of the Washington plan and daily monitoring of the actual agency activities must take place in the field. It is the experience gained in the field which demonstrates the need for changes in plan.

The same deficiencies that are apparent at the Washington level are also apparent in the field. We do not have adequate machinery and procedures to provide the coordinated operations that we need. Executive Order No. 10983, dated November 8, 1960, does place affirmative responsibility upon the Chief of Mission in any country to coordinate and supervise the exercise of functions of all U. S. agencies operating in the country to which he is accredited. Unfortunately, he has not been provided with the assistance he needs if he is to adequately carry out this responsibility.

Many of the Chiefs of Mission have tried to provide their own coordinating machinery by creating ad hoc committees or "country teams" on which each of the agencies carrying on special operations in the country are represented. This machinery is not adequate for

a country which has reached the critical stage. The members of the country team are normally the chiefs of the several agencies operating in the country. Their coordinating duties are an additional responsibility to their primary missions. They do not have the time or the freedom of action that is required for effective supervision of special operators.

We must also recognize that at times the Chief of Mission may not be the best choice for the directing head of a country team. He may lack the knowledge and understanding of the needs and requirements of the other participating agencies or be unsympathetic to their problems. In such situations the best qualified person with intimate knowledge of the country should be placed in charge. ✓

#### Essential Characteristics of an Effective Organization

An effective coordinated program for a particular critical country can be obtained only through an organization which obtains the following results:

1. It must enable the President to determine at the earliest possible time that the situation in a particular country has become critical or that an opportunity for improvement exists.
2. It must provide a clear statement of national objectives. These must be expressed in terms of national operating goals within a specified time-period for the particular country and must be made known to every participating agency both in Washington and in the country involved.
3. It must provide an over-all coordinated plan covering the special operations of every participating agency both in Washington and in the country involved.
4. It must provide for maximum efficient utilization of all United States assets.
5. It must provide effective monitoring of the special operation of every participating agency both in Washington and in the country involved so as to ensure that those activities are in accordance with the plan and in furtherance of the national objectives.
6. It must provide flexibility so that changes in the plan dictated by operational experience or change of circumstances can be readily and timely made.



### The Recommended Organisation

We believe that the following organizational plan meets all of the essential requirements listed above.

#### Determination of Criticality or Opportunity

1. The President should establish an interdepartmental committee or board to be known as the Critical Areas Board. Members of the board will be the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Directors of CIA, ICA and USIA, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.
2. The board will not meet at fixed or regular intervals. It will meet only on the call of the President or on the call of the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs on the request of any member.
3. It is important that the board does not become bureaucratized. Therefore, the board will not have an independent Secretariat. Such staff assistance as may be needed by any member will be furnished by that member from the employees of his own department or agency.
4. The function of the board will not be to furnish the President with an agreed position. Its task will be to make sure that all of the facts bearing on the situation and all of the pros and cons of every alternative course of action are presented to the President for consideration in making his decision. Each member of the board, however, will submit to the President his own view as to whether the facts indicate that the situation in the country involved has become critical or provides an opportunity for improving our position.
5. The determination will be made by the President.

#### Organization in Washington

1. When the President determines that conditions in a country are critical or present an opportunity for improvement he will establish a Task Force for that country. One representative from each department and agency carrying on special operations in the country involved will serve with the Task Force.
2. The President will select from the members of the Task Force a Director, who shall devote his full time to the business of the Task

Force and will be relieved of all other departmental or agency duties. The other members of the Task Force will devote such time to the duties of the Task Force as the Director shall require.

3. Unless the President has previously made a determination of the national objective with respect to the country involved, the Task Force will prepare within such time limit as the President may fix for submission for the approval of the President such a statement of national objective in terms of operational goals within a specified time period.

4. After approval of the statement of national objectives by the President, the Task Force shall:

- a. Prepare a plan for coordinating the special operations in the country involved of every agency conducting such activities in that country.
- b. Supervise and coordinate the special operations of every agency carrying on such activities in the country involved pursuant to the plan, making maximum effective use of all United States assets.
- c. Monitor the activities of each agency carrying on special operations in the country involved to ensure compliance with the plan.
- d. Make such changes in the plan as experience and change of circumstances may dictate.
- e. Keep the President and his major advisors fully informed.

5. In the event that an entire area comprising several countries should be determined to be critical, a Task Force should be established for that area. In that event, the several country Task Forces will operate under the supervision and coordination of the Area Task Force.

#### Organization in the Country Involved

1. Unless otherwise determined by the President, the Chief of Mission in the country involved will continue to be responsible for coordination and supervision of all U. S. special operations in his country.

2. The Chief of Mission will be supplied with a special three man staff to assist him in carrying out his coordinating and supervisory duties.



- a. One will be responsible for all planning required to implement the Washington plan.
  - b. One will monitor all U. S. special operations to ensure compliance with plan.
  - c. One will be responsible for all fiscal matters.
3. It will be the duty of the Chief of Mission and his special staff:
- a. To prepare detailed plans in implementation of the national plan.
  - b. To supervise and coordinate at the local level the special operations of all United States agencies in the area.
  - c. Monitor all special operations for compliance with the plan and the national objective.
  - d. Recommend to the Task Force in Washington changes in the plan which experience or change in circumstances may require.
4. If the President should determine that in any particular case the Chief of Mission cannot or should not be responsible for coordination and supervision of all special operations in the country involved he will designate the person who shall be entrusted with that responsibility.

## VIETNAM

### Concept of Action

It is assumed that the President will determine that conditions in Vietnam are critical and will establish a Washington task force for that country. Further, it is assumed that this will be done by 15 April 1961, to permit this task force to come up with an approved plan of action prior to sending a new U. S. Ambassador to Vietnam, so that he can start moving towards U. S. goals upon arrival.

### Initial Actions

1. The Presidential directive should name a Director and provide for members of a Vietnam Task Force from Defense, State, CIA, ICA, and USIA. The organization providing the Director will support the Task Force administratively.
2. The Task Force will submit a statement of U. S. goals and implementing planning to the President for approval by 21 April.
3. The Task Force will prepare a list of candidates for a special three-man staff for the Ambassador (plans officer, operations officer, fiscal officer), and will have this staff selected and appointed with the Ambassador's approval.
4. The Task Force will bring the Ambassador and his three-man staff together in Washington, "marry" them, and present them to the President for his instructions.
5. The Task Force will then supervise and coordinate the activities of every U. S. agency carrying out operations pursuant to the plan in Vietnam to insure success of the approved plan, until the contingency in Vietnam is determined to have been overcome and that U. S. goals can be achieved by normal procedures.

### Goals

Present U. S. policy objectives are now stated in general terms. Detailed plans, such as the Counter-Insurgency Plan,

only cover part of the actions needed to reach U.S. goals. A fresh statement of goals and tasks, making use of work now underway, would provide firmer purpose to U.S. efforts. True objectives in Vietnam seem to fall into three inter-related parts:

1. Pacification - to end the internal Communist threat in South Vietnam.
2. Stabilization - to promote the growth of healthy democracy in South Vietnam.
3. Unification - to provide a favorable climate for a free choice by the Vietnamese to unify their country, and then to give them the opportunity to make that choice.

### Tasks

#### Pacification

- Assign top priority to the defeat of Viet-Cong forces and the denial of South Vietnam to further entry of Communist paramilitary and subversive forces.
- Aggressively implement the Counter-Insurgency Plan, while recognizing that it probably requires adjustment to fit both native Vietnamese needs and the newest U.S. military techniques and hardware.
- Give Vietnam stronger U.S. psychological-political support. The Vice President might visit Saigon and announce U.S. determination to support Vietnam's desire to remain free.
- Concentrate U.S. military research and development to develop better military equipment for use in resolving insurgency problems in Vietnam. The area should be treated as a laboratory and proving ground, as far as this is politically feasible.
- Eliminate artificial restrictions imposed by the strict U.S. interpretation of the Geneva Agreement so to permit as many U.S. personnel in Vietnam as are needed to help the Vietnamese help themselves effectively.

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- Use the force of world opinion to stop Viet-Cong transit of Cambodia. A task force of journalists should visit Cambodia to report on activities in border provinces such as Svayrieng and on policies being implemented by Sihanouk and other officials.

#### Stabilization

- Good public administration should follow the troops, moving immediately into pacified areas. The U. S. Peace Corps can be used dynamically to assist in this, particularly in fields of public health, education, and agriculture. Community development in the democratic tradition can be undertaken by combined teams of U. S. Peace Corps, Vietnamese Civic Action, and Filipino Operation Brotherhood.

- With the agreement of the Vietnamese government, the U. S. should use its "good office" to bring out all political parties, to help them define party platforms for the national good, to encourage the coalescing into two major political groupings, and to redefine political crimes in realistic objective, rather than subjective terms.

- Communications and transport should be expanded rapidly to knit national unity. Light aircraft capabilities should be improved. Government officials should be induced to get away frequently from their desks in Saigon for more direct actions in the field. The President should be encouraged to hold occasional Cabinet meetings in the provinces, particularly in newly pacified areas.

- The Washington Task Force should send into Vietnam a practical economic team, which should include representatives of U. S. business, to work out with the Vietnamese effective plans to speed up national development, give Vietnam a better tax structure, and establish a sound basis for foreign investment. The numerous U. S. and other economic plans for Vietnam should be re-examined for sound ideas to be incorporated into a firm new plan.

- Viet-Cong prisoners should be rehabilitated along the lines of experiences with Communist prisoners in Greece and in EDCOR in the Philippines. U. S. teams, headed by U. S. military, should assist the Vietnamese in this work.

#### Unification

- Communist North Vietnam should be subjected immediately to a heavy and sustained psychological campaign; a first step would be to beef up radio broadcast capabilities beamed to the North.

- Areas just south of the 17th Parallel in Free Vietnam should be developed as show-places, particularly in agricultural improvements. News about "fish-ponds" built in Vietnam by Filipinos of Operation Brotherhood travelled throughout the north rapidly, giving a highly desirable contrast between the methods of free men and those of the Chinese Communist agricultural advisors.

- Introduce teams of Free Vietnamese into the North to create the means for the people to liberate themselves from Communist controls and coercion. Related actions could be undertaken by Chinese Nationalists in Southern China. Hope could be awakened by taking initial actions against symbols of Communist power; the railroad, the cement plant, and the large modern printing plant in Hanoi (which the Viet-Minh took in 1955).

- Encourage again the movement of refugees into the South by stimulating the desire to do so among the people in the North, by establishing better means of ingress to the South, and by re-establishing the highly successful refugee settlement program. Sustained world opinion should be focused on the plight of the Northern people in order to bring pressure on the International Control Commission to assist the movement of refugees. The goal should be a million refugees.

- An internal liberation movement should be created in the North, organized along lines of political-revolution, with the goal of freeing the North of Communist control and eventually unifying a Free North with a Free South. The movement should be affiliated with the government of South Vietnam.

- When a clear majority can be counted upon to vote for freedom, and election machinery can be set up to protect a free vote, the sponsors of the Geneva Agreement of 1954 should be induced to hold the plebiscite promised in that document. It was written to accommodate the then known control of the electorate by the Communists, but there is no reason why the Free World should not turn the table when it is able to do so.

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19 April 1961

I have no useful comment to make on the organizational or operational aspects of this paper.

This office could certainly help in determining the "criticality" of situations. Indeed, this might become the main purpose of certain NIEs, and it would give extra point and direction to others. I believe we could do a better job in many of our estimates if we bore in mind that the procedures prescribed in this <sup>paper</sup> ~~matter~~ might be set in motion as a consequence of the NIE.

Experience indicates that questions of definition would arise -- just what is meant by "critical", for example, and, are there many countries in the underdeveloped world which are not approaching the critical stage, at least by some definitions. Common sense ought to solve such problems, but common sense is apt to depart when people begin asking for definitions.

Nobody should expect too much from intelligence estimates of approaching criticality. There are places where it is



easy: Angola, Cuba, Laos, Vietnam. There are others where criticality suddenly arises, out of a situation perhaps thought comparatively stable: Iraq before Kassim, Laos in the stage before Kong Le (perhaps), etc.

But these are peripheral comments. I like the implications of this plan for ONE business, and believe we could make some contribution to its success.



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